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Conclusions of the High-level Committee on Management at its fourteenth session

(Palisades, New York, 20 and 21 September 2007)

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I. Introduction

1. The High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) held its fourteenth regular session in Palisades, New York, on 20 and 21 September 2007. The meeting was chaired, in alternate sessions, by the Chairperson of the Committee, the Executive Director of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Thoraya Obaid, and by its Vice-Chairman, the Assistant Director-General, and Representative of the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Denis Aitken. For the fourth time, HLCM was meeting at the same time and venue as the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), and a joint session with HLCP was held on 21 September.

II. Adoption of the agenda

2. The agenda as adopted by the Committee is reflected in the table of contents.

3. The complete list of participants is provided in annex I to the present report.

4. All documents related to the session are available on the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) website at https://hlcm.unsystemceb.org/documents/200709/.

5. Before moving to the regular agenda items, the Chair recalled that at this session the Committee was for the first time experimenting with an "open hour" informal session, with the intention of providing members with a non-formal forum for raising issues of concern to them that they might not be able to raise during the formal part of the meeting. The Chair reminded the group that no decisions could be taken during that informal session.

6. The first open hour session, scheduled for the end of the first day, included the following topics, put forward by the Legal Network (see CEB/2007/HLCM/19):

(a) Establishment of a systematic consultation procedure on documents having legal implications;

(b) Application of decisions, policy documents and inter-agency agreements, as adopted by the HLCM/CEB, by United Nations organizations and entities.

III. Dialogue with representatives of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations and the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System

7. In accordance with established practice, the Committee conducted an exchange of views with the representatives of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) and the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA). FICSA was represented by Robert Weisell; CCISUA was represented by Rita Wallace and Ronald Hall. The statements of the representatives of FICSA and CCISUA are provided in annexes II and III, respectively.

8. The discussion that followed focused mainly on the changes taking place throughout the United Nations due to reforms and changing field conditions. The issues of the security and safety of staff, contracts, job security, mobility, staff development and salary survey methodology were highlighted by the representatives of CCISUA and FICSA. The need for coherence and consistency in the treatment of staff within the eight "Delivering as one" pilot countries was raised as a matter of particular concern. The CCISUA representatives voiced their support for the Secretary-General's proposal that there be a standard series of contracts for all United Nations staff. The staff representatives supported the efforts being made to formalize a fair dual-career policy, as spousal employment is considered key to a successful mobility policy.

9. The Committee was also informed that FICSA and CCISUA had started a dialogue with the goal of working more closely together and that both believed that it would be to the advantage of all that there not be separate bodies. In response to the comment made by the representative of FICSA on the membership of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee (SMCC), the representative of the Secretariat explained that the Committee was the joint staff-management machinery at the Secretariat level and that, therefore, neither CCISUA nor FICSA were members, and added that a working group was being established to review the terms of reference of SMCC.

10. The issue of the release, with full financial support, of the President and General Secretary of FICSA was also discussed at length, as FICSA has been unable to fill the position of General Secretary because one of the two candidates had withdrawn her name during the sixtieth FICSA Council, held in February 2007, owing to her organization's doubts as to its ability to fund her post were she to be elected. Furthermore, the sole remaining nominee, who was elected by secret ballot, never assumed the FICSA position and subsequently resigned owing to the inability of her organization to fund her post.

11. In response, the Human Resources Network co-spokesperson, Dyane Dufresne-Klaus, informed HLCM members that considerable efforts had been made to reach a solution to the issue of the release of FICSA elected officers. The co-spokesperson noted that the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ), in its 1996 report on the subject, stated that CCAQ reaffirmed its position that cost-sharing arrangements could be considered, on a strictly ad hoc basis, after consulting with the finance and budget sector of CCAQ and taking into consideration the amount involved and the ability of the organization concerned, based on size or other factors, to absorb them (see CCAQ(PER)/84/CRP.1/Rev.1). HLCM considered that a temporary solution had been found, however, as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) had agreed to release and fund the candidate from IMO, if elected, for the position of General Secretary of FICSA for one term. Since this constituted a temporary solution, it was agreed that all efforts must be made to find a longer-term solution. The FICSA representative stressed that if the same arrangements were not made for candidates from other organizations, the solution would not be satisfactory in that the process would not be truly democratic.

12. In relation to the eight "Delivering as one" pilot countries, the staff associations expressed concern about how staff representation would function in a unified office. They stated that in their view, it was clear that staff representation would need to evolve, adjust and change in accordance with the new structures. The

pilots would also have significant implications for staff, and the Human Resources Network was encouraged to carefully consider such implications from all perspectives.

Conclusions and action points

13. The Committee welcomed the move by FICSA and CCISUA towards coordinating their efforts and considered any step towards a closer union as beneficial to the staff and the United Nations system.

14. The Committee also expressed its appreciation to IMO for agreeing to release and fund a candidate from IMO for the post of General Secretary of FICSA for a two-year term.

15. On the issue of the release and funding of staff representatives, the Human Resources Network would work closely with FICSA with the aim of finding a long-term solution to the issue and present a proposal to HLCM at its next session.

IV. Cooperation with the International Civil Service Commission

16. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) were invited to brief the Committee on the outcome of the recent discussion conducted by the Commission on its functioning and mechanisms, with a view to strengthening its relationship and improving cooperation with CEB and the organizations of the United Nations system.

17. The Chairman of the ICSC briefed HLCM on the Commission's strategy and vision. He highlighted the Commission's commitment to change and to seeking new ways to form strategic partnerships with the organizations of the common system. He stressed that leading change, building trust and maintaining the unity of the common system, as well as ensuring that sound and flexible human resources systems are in place, were his top priorities. The full statement of the Chairman is provided in annex IV.

18. The Chairman highlighted a number of initiatives already launched by the Commission. In July, members of the Commission met with the executive heads of Geneva-based organizations prior to its summer session. The Commission held a retreat with the objective of re-examining its role and seeking ways of becoming more proactive. It also agreed to hold shorter sessions of two weeks and to hold more informal meetings, including meetings of working groups and task forces, in between sessions.

19. The Chairman recognized that, given the different mandates and functions of member organizations, a more flexible approach would be required to make sure that ICSC decisions serve the interest of all organizations. The Commission expressed the wish to work closely and in tangible ways with CEB, the organizations and the staff to improve the exchange of information and views.

Conclusions and action points

20. The Committee welcomed the ICSC initiative aimed at strengthening its partnerships with CEB, the organizations and staff representatives, as that would enable the Commission to focus on issues of higher value to organizations.

21. The Committee welcomed the decision to hold shorter ICSC sessions and emphasized the need for flexibility, given the different mandates and functions of member organizations. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the new outreach strategy outlined by the Commission and encouraged ICSC to continue the dialogue with its key stakeholders.

V. Business practices

22. HLCM, at its thirteenth session, agreed to develop, with the support of its Networks, a plan of action for the harmonization and reform of business practices, based on indicative priorities and areas of interest identified during the review of a preliminary proposal by the CEB secretariat.

23. Following endorsement of that initiative by CEB at its April 2007 session, a Steering Group led by the Vice-Chairman of HLCM (Denis Aitken, (WHO)) and composed of the current Chairs of the HLCM Networks — Jay Karia (United Nations), Gary Eidet (International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)), Martha Helena Lopez (United Nations), Dyane Dufresne-Klaus (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) and Susana Malcorra (World Food Programme (WFP)) — with support provided by the CEB secretariat, started to develop such a plan of action, including detailed terms of reference outlining the scope, objectives, timeline and resources for each of the projects identified.

24. Two criteria were identified by the Steering Group as the principles inspiring the development of project proposals and the assessment of priorities to be included in the plan: (a) achieving efficiencies and (b) promoting the concept of "Delivering as one" at the country level.

25. The proposed plan was elaborated in the context of the current review of the role and functioning of CEB, and the Group took into consideration the management coherence requirements arising from the launching of the "Delivering as one" pilots.

26. Following approval by HLCM, funding and endorsement for the plan would be sought primarily through extrabudgetary mechanisms and not through the normal cost-sharing arrangements in place for jointly financed activities.

27. There was consensus on the fact that the quality of the design and, subsequently, the successful implementation of any project aimed at the harmonization and reform of business practices across the United Nations system would depend heavily on the commitment made by organizations to contribute the time and skills of their internal resources to such an effort. It was understood that the availability of the necessary financial means and of human resources from the external market would complement and support the organizations' own commitment to make such projects happen.

28. The project proposals presented to the Committee cut across all management areas: some belonged specifically to the human resources domain, while others focused more on financial management or information and communication

technology practices. Many reflected, to some degree, a deliberate effort to enhance knowledge-sharing internally, across functional borders, and externally, across organizations.

29. Some projects were already ripe for the formulation of action plans, the assignment of dedicated resources and implementation, while others still required further investigation and were therefore designed as feasibility studies. Some were new, and others expanded on existing initiatives and programmes that were being brought to scale through central coordination and support.

30. The Committee examined the proposed plan of action both as a complete and homogeneous package that would serve as a reference framework for the HLCM programme of work for the next biennium and in terms of its individual components (the various project proposals).

31. The staff representatives who had been invited by the Committee to participate in the discussion appreciated the initiative and offered some comments, particularly in connection with the staff requirements emerging from the implementation of the "Delivering as one" pilots; the critical need to increase staff training and development at all levels; and the tools and mechanisms required for promoting mobility in a manner that is beneficial both to organizations and to their staff.

32. It was emphasized that in the consideration of any initiative aimed at service offshoring and/or outsourcing, account should be taken of the sensitivity of the subject.

33. Concerning the mechanisms to be adopted for the channelling of contributions towards the proposal, the representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) noted that all options should be explored, including existing modalities such as multi-donor trust funds, with a view to identifying the most appropriate one.

34. There was consensus on the fact that the entire proposal had to be considered from an actionable and operational point of view. For that reason, a number of follow-up actions and implementation modalities were discussed and agreed upon by the Committee, as summarized below.

Conclusions and action points

35. The Committee approved the overall thrust of the document as well as, one by one, the 19 initiatives outlined in section VI, p. 12, of document CEB/2007/HLCM/16, with the exception of the human resources project number 2 on a framework for the harmonization and coordination of staff mobility and well-being initiatives, which, given its ongoing and internal nature, would be best funded through core contributions from United Nations system organizations' regular budgets; information and communication technology project number 6 on common services — global networks, which the Committee agreed to fund entirely from voluntary contributions already committed by organizations (see below, section VIII.C); and information and communication technology project number 8 on a United Nations system directory, which would be pursued within the context of the United Nations Development Group.

36. Input into the plan of action from the newly established HLCM Procurement and Legal Networks would be provided in the fall of 2007. Once ready, these

proposals would be submitted to the Committee's Steering Group for appropriate evaluation.

37. Two additional projects that had received the endorsement of both the Finance and Budget Network and the HLCM Steering Group but whose timing and modalities had not been considered and set in time for the HLCM review would shortly be submitted to the Committee's Steering Group for evaluation. They are:

(a) A feasibility study for putting in place common treasury services;

(b) The completion of a comparative analysis of organizations' financial regulations and rules, leading to an action plan for system-wide harmonization.

38. An effort involving prioritization within approved initiatives (priorities within priorities) would be carried out by the relevant HLCM Networks. Such effort would include the definition of operational modalities and the sequencing of initiatives, given the wide diversity among the proposed time frames for their implementation and completion. Meeting the requirements of the "Delivering as one" pilots should be a driving principle for the prioritization effort.

39. The views of the staff should be taken into due consideration during the process of establishing priorities.

40. For each project there would be a lead agency, to be determined upon consultation within the relevant HLCM Network. The lead agency, which would bear the ultimate responsibility for delivery, would devise a detailed implementation plan and the corresponding governance mechanisms. Project plans should include an assessment of expected cost savings and return on investments.

41. HLCM organizations can voluntarily commit to participate in any of the proposed initiatives (cluster approach).

42. Cost and duration estimates for each project would have to be validated before a plan of action is submitted to donors. The expected time frame would have to be determined depending on the receipt and allocation of required funding.

43. The business practices proposal, whose content would represent the basis for the programme of work of HLCM and its secretariat for the next biennium, would be submitted for endorsement and approval at the fall session of CEB.

44. The final business practices proposal should be packaged for fund-raising in such a way that it clearly conveys its interdisciplinary nature, highlighting the high-value impact and cost-saving initiatives. It should clearly indicate that no conditions may be attached by donors to funding commitments.

45. The HLCM Steering Group, led by the Chair and Vice-Chair of HLCM and composed of the Chairs of the HLCM Networks and the Director of the CEB secretariat, would develop a coordinated communications and fund-raising strategy.

46. Concerning the proposal to establish a separate trust fund under the CEB secretariat for the channelling of contributions towards that initiative, advice from the Chairs of the Finance and Budget Network would be sought in order to identify the best option, including the possibility of using existing modalities.

47. The governance mechanisms outlined in section IV of CEB/2007/HLCM/16, which provide for the additional roles and responsibilities of the lead agency as described above, were endorsed by the Committee as follows.

(a) High-level endorsement of detailed project budgets (as submitted by the lead agency) by the Chair of HLCM and the HLCM Steering Group (Vice-Chair of HLCM, Network spokespersons, Director of the CEB secretariat);

(b) Formal financial authorization of expenses for each individual project by the lead agency responsible for the project;

(c) Annual reporting by the lead agency to the plenary on the status of expenses against proposed budgets and on the results achieved against stated objectives, with a clear indication of accountabilities.

48. Separate ad hoc funding for the professional evaluation of activities performed within the proposed plan of action would be provided for in the overall funding requirements, together with a provision for administrative support and coordination.

VI. Security and safety of staff

49. As is customary, the Committee heard a briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, David Veness, on the strategic development of the United Nations Security Management System.

50. The briefing focused on the growing, direct and explicit threat posed by terrorist groups to the United Nations.

51. The Committee was brought up to date on the recent propaganda campaign by Al-Qaida, which is increasingly attempting to reach a global audience through a variety of multilingual, audio, video and text productions featuring its senior leaders, which are further disseminated through multiple extremist websites. It was noted that such propaganda campaigns have proved very effective.

52. In its most recent media production, Al-Qaida expanded its anti-United Nations propaganda beyond its usual focus on the political and peacekeeping role of the United Nations to include the Organization's humanitarian programmes and activities.

53. Based on the fact that security is both an individual and a collective responsibility, the Under-Secretary-General urged consideration of three options for strategic development actions that the United Nations system could take to mitigate these daunting threats.

54. The first is visible leadership, which needs to be based on a clear understanding of the reality of present dangers. In that respect, UNDP plays a particularly valuable role, especially in its vital support for designated officials.

55. As concerns accountability, HLCM member organizations have a collective security accountability framework. Though endorsed by the Committee, that document should be more widely disseminated to enhance awareness of the principles of accountability it contains, which should, in turn, be included more frequently in regular business and management decision-making.

56. The third option suggested was the early inclusion of security issues in plans, projects and programmes, that is, the mainstreaming of security. If security aspects are considered at the earliest stages of planning, the result is more effective, efficient and economical. As an example of good practice in terms of both accountability and the early inclusion of security in the planning process, the

Under-Secretary-General referred to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) list of Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies, which contains guiding principles and specifies the actions to be taken at the earliest stages of any crisis response.

57. As regards the development of the Department of Safety and Security at the Secretariat, progress continued to be made in terms of growth, integration and operational effectiveness. The test of the Department's success would be the extent to which all other staff in the United Nations system were able to do their work. Concerns were reiterated with respect to security gaps affecting national staff, an underemphasis on safety (especially vehicle safety) and inadequate crisis-response mechanisms.

58. In conclusion, the Under-Secretary-General recommended that the Committee endorse the contents of the report of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN).

59. Organizations expressed deep appreciation for the work of the Department and, in the discussion that followed, noted, among other main points, the observation made by IASMN that, at many Security Management Team meetings, agencies are represented by very junior staff who are not in a position to make decisions, and emphasized that agencies must ensure adequate and appropriate levels of representation at the Team meetings, as it is unfair to place that burden on the designated official alone.

60. A number of organizations also expressed the need to clarify the scope of IASMN, as references to the "Field" Security Management System still exist in various documents. The Under-Secretary-General made it clear that there was only one Security Management System and that it pertains to all United Nations duty stations, be they headquarters or field duty stations, and that the structure of the Department itself reflects that integration. The designation "Field" survives only insofar as that is the portion whose cost is shared by the agencies. With respect to the so-called headquarters locations, it was noted that host-country agreements and the fact that the elected executive heads of the specialized agencies are accountable only to their governing bodies add a level of complexity and are factors that must be taken into consideration.

61. The Committee took note of these comments and stressed the critical importance of addressing any issues relating to the Security Management System within the framework of the System itself, thus ensuring the preservation of a cohesive, coordinated approach to delivering security and safety to United Nations system staff.

62. The decision by IASMN to set its meeting times on the basis of the HLCM meeting schedule, taking into consideration the meeting schedules of the organizations concerned, was noted with appreciation.

63. The Committee then considered a proposal (see CEB/2007/HLCM/23) to re-establish a technical working group to follow up on its previous decision to move forward with a more comprehensive, all-encompassing project to address significant issues remaining outside the mandate of the current review of the cost-sharing formula (including alternative sources of funding and mainstreaming) for the 2010-2011 biennium.

64. In that context, there was general consensus on the funding of the Security Management System being a political rather than a technical issue and that any discussions on the matter should therefore be held at that level to ensure that the solutions proposed are commensurate with the scale of the problem.

65. The Committee encouraged member organizations to maintain pressure on their governing bodies to make sure that issues relating to the security and safety of staff receive the necessary attention and resources, with a view to increasingly mainstreaming such issues in all activities and mandates carried out in the United Nations system.

66. With specific regard to the significant unspent balances in the Security Management System cost-shared budget for the biennium 2006-2007, organizations recommended that such balances be credited to their respective shares for the following biennium.

Conclusions and action points

67. The Committee endorsed the IASMN report subject to the comments of the meeting.

68. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the efforts made by the Department of Safety and Security to increase accountability with respect to its activities by providing detailed and timely information on its status of expenditure, the programme performance of its operations and the vacancy status of its posts, and it encouraged the Department to continue to do so, in order to enhance the overall transparency of and stakeholders' participation in the management of the United Nations Security Management System.

69. With a view to facilitating the resolution of issues that have emerged or may emerge with respect to the management and funding of the System, the Committee appointed a small Advisory Group of three member organizations that would provide its support to the Department upon request by HLCM. The group membership was determined as follows: (a) WFP, in representation of United Nations funds and programmes; (b) the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, in representation of small organizations; and (c) WHO, in representation of specialized agencies.

70. Andrew Lukach, Senior Security Manager of UNDP, would serve as Secretary of the Advisory Group.

VII. Institutional links between the High-level Committee on Management and the representatives of the internal audit services of United Nations organizations and multilateral financial institutions — disclosure of internal audit reports

71. The Chair of HLCM recalled that in a letter dated 28 June 2007, the representatives of the internal audit services of United Nations organizations and multilateral financial institutions (RIAS) had asked to explore ways in which the institutional links between HLCM and the United Nations internal audit community could be improved. She therefore invited Claus Andreasen, Director, Internal Audit, of UNICEF to explain the motivation and objectives of that request.

72. RIAS brings together the heads of internal audit services across the United Nations system and their counterparts from the international financial institutions and other related institutions. It meets annually.

73. Internal audit and oversight issues are increasingly the subject of attention from and discussion among Chief Executives in the United Nations family. RIAS firmly believed that direct consultation and communication with HLCM on matters related to internal audit would help to inform the debate.

74. Mr. Andreasen then presented to the Committee the position paper prepared by RIAS in consultation with the Finance and Budget Network, the Panel of External Auditors and the Institute of Internal Auditors, on issues relating to the potential impact of communicating final internal audit reports to Member States on effectiveness and transparency, pursuant to the request of HLCM at its thirteenth session and the subsequent conclusions of CEB at its first regular session of April 2007.

75. As outlined in document CEB/2007/HLCM/18, the existing variety of policies on the disclosure of internal audit reports in the United Nations made it difficult to identify a "fit for all" disclosure policy. For some organizations, there was no longer any choice, as Member States have decided or are finalizing decisions on whether or not to share such reports. For the others, three options could be considered, as follows:

(a) Option 1, no disclosure of reports: in this option, at no point is the content of the reports disclosed to Member States, either directly or indirectly;

(b) Option 2, disclosure of reports through internal oversight services (IOS) activity reports: in this option, the salient points of IOS reports and/or systemic issues are included in the annual report of the head of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the activities of the Office to governing bodies, transmitted unchanged through the executive head. The executive head provides his/her comments separately;

(c) Option 3, disclosure of reports based on an organization policy: in this option, internal audit reports will be disclosed to Member States subject to conditions and criteria defined in a policy that should not be applied retroactively. This option could include giving Member States the possibility of reading the reports in the OIOS office and of posing questions to the chief audit executive as needed. Audit/oversight committees could provide a useful conduit for drawing the attention of the governing bodies to any internal audit reports of particular concern.

Notwithstanding the above options, the standards and code of ethics contained in the Professional Practices Framework of the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) would allow, in exceptional circumstances, the chief audit executive to bring a report to the attention of Member States.

76. Based on the above, RIAS expressed the professional view that the third option may offer the most appropriate solution to the issue of the disclosure of internal audit reports.

Conclusions and action points

77. The Committee welcomed the request of RIAS relating to improving the institutional links between HLCM and the United Nations internal audit community

and agreed that RIAS would develop a proposal on the modalities and mechanisms for participation in the HLCM framework, to be submitted to the Committee for approval at its next session.

78. The Committee endorsed the recommendation of RIAS on the disclosure of internal audit reports, as outlined in paragraphs 23 and 24 of CEB/2007/HLCM/18, which favours the third option (paragraph 75 (c) above), but states that each United Nations entity has the prerogative to choose which option to adopt, as follows.

- While each United Nations entity has the prerogative to choose which option to follow, the heads of United Nations internal audit functions would like to express the professional view that the third option may offer the most appropriate solution to the issue of disclosure of internal audit reports. The executive heads may wish to approach their governing bodies on this matter.
- The heads of United Nations internal audit functions further recommend that the disclosure policy be consistent with the IIA professional guidance, as referred to in paragraphs 4 and 5 of document CEB/2007/HLCM/18.

VIII. High-level Committee on Management networks

A. Procurement issues

79. The Committee heard a briefing by the representative of the newly established HLCM Procurement Network, James Provenzano, on the recent activities of the Network, which held its first regular session in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 11 to 15 June 2007.

80. At that meeting, Dominik Heinrich of the World Food Programme was elected Vice-Chair. Paul Acriviadis of the World Health Organization succeeded David Smith as Chair of the Network for 2007-2008.

81. Key focus areas discussed during that meeting included United Nations reform; vendor management; procurement professionalization; and access to suppliers from developing countries and countries in transition.

82. A meeting was scheduled for the last week of September 2007 in Copenhagen to continue discussions on these issues.

83. Following the Procurement Network meeting in Johannesburg, a working group was established to develop a proposal setting forth principles for sanctions against suspect vendors. That proposal, outlined in CEB/2007/HLCM/29, was submitted to the Committee for endorsement of the proposed principles and recommendation.

84. The Network also asked the Committee to instruct the audit, oversight and legal offices of respective United Nations system organizations to cooperate with network members in responding to the questionnaire attached to document CEB/2007/HLCM/29.

85. As stated in the recommendation, a firm proposal, which would include guidelines for seeking a common United Nations system sanctions mechanism against suspect vendors, would be submitted to HLCM at its 2008 spring session for review and approval. The guidelines would define the criteria for the suspension or

removal of vendors from the United Nations vendor databases, describe the role and responsibilities of the Procurement Network and stipulate procedures for decision by HLCM. One issue that would require further discussion and review among network members is the treatment to be accorded vendors suspended from the vendor database.

86. In the discussion that followed, the Committee noted that the review of standard procurement criteria was a major opportunity to pursue the inclusion of "labour clauses" in procurement contracts across the United Nations system. One approach suggested was the inclusion of such clauses as part of the requests for proposal and the requirement of self-certification by vendors. The International Labour Organization offered its active collaboration in any further work on this matter.

87. The issue of barring vendors on other grounds (such as fraud) raised questions about legal exposure in the case of false accusations, inaccurate information, confidentiality breaches and the possible non-recognition of the privileges and immunities of the United Nations system organizations. It also raised capacity issues for smaller agencies.

88. The Committee further suggested the inclusion in the proposal of a capacity-building strategy for national partners, as dictated by the Paris declaration; noted that, when a vendor company is suspended, such suspension should be extended to its subsidiaries; and recommended the establishment of a procedure for quick communication and action by all United Nations system organizations upon suspension of a vendor by one organization.

Conclusions and action points

89. The Committee endorsed the principles and the recommendation contained in the proposal on vendor suspension submitted by the Procurement Network and encouraged the Network to take account of the comments and suggestions offered by the Committee relating to the continuation of work on this issue.

90. The Committee also asked the Procurement Network to finalize its programme of work, taking into adequate consideration system-wide issues for inclusion in the business practices proposal.

B. Legal issues

91. The Committee received a briefing on the progress made to date in the establishment of the HLCM Network of Legal Advisers, including a presentation of the Network's draft programme of work.

92. The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and Chair of the Legal Network, Nicolas Michel, explained that the overall objective of the Network would be to improve system-wide coherence in the provision of legal services thus responding to the need to increase the overall coherence of the United Nations system in full respect of the autonomy of member organizations. That would allow them to better protect the interests of the entities concerned while enabling them to carry out their respective mandates more effectively for the benefit of Member States. This is particularly important at a time when integrated mandates and policies are being adopted by intergovernmental bodies.

93. At the moment, the Legal Network is composed of two sub-networks: the sub-network of Legal Advisers of specialized and related agencies, which has approximately 23 members, and the sub-network of Legal Liaison Officers, which brings together the chiefs or senior legal officers of offices away from Headquarters, funds and programmes, regional commissions, ad hoc tribunals and treaty bodies institutionally linked to the United Nations, and has approximately 26 members. A third sub-network comprising Chiefs or senior Legal Officers serving in field missions led either by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat, Department of Field Support of the Secretariat or the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, to include approximately 30 members, is currently being established.

94. Efforts would also be made to set up a secured website accessible to all Legal Advisers or Officers of the United Nations system — including an electronic forum allowing interaction — and where documents of common interest, as well as guidelines, policies and sample agreements, would be made available.

95. In the discussion that followed, the Committee suggested, inter alia, that professional advice from the Legal Network be made available to organizations on the issue of compliance by host Governments with the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

96. The Under-Secretary-General then introduced the two subjects that the Legal Network had suggested for discussion during the "open hour" session, namely the establishment of a systematic consultation procedure on documents having legal implications and the application of decisions, policy documents and inter-agency agreements, as adopted by HLCM/CEB, by United Nations organizations and entities.

Conclusions and action points

97. The Committee endorsed the Legal Network's proposed programme of work and agreed that the two subjects put forward for the "open hour" session, namely the establishment of a systematic consultation procedure on documents having legal implications and the application of decisions, policy documents and inter-agency agreements, as adopted by HLCM/CEB, by United Nations organizations and entities would be formally discussed, respectively, at the spring 2008 and fall 2008 sessions of HLCM, subject to completion of the necessary consultations with members of the Network.

98. The Committee encouraged the Legal Network to coordinate with the CEB secretariat to establish appropriate communication and information-sharing mechanisms with HLCM and its Networks, including the use of the HLCM websites. The Committee further asked the Network to consider issues of a system-wide nature for inclusion in the business practices proposal.

C. Information and communication technology issues

99. The Chair of the Information and Communication Technology Network, Susana Malcorra, briefed the Committee on the recent activities and initiatives of the Network, in particular on the follow-up to the Information and Communication

Technology projects previously requested by the Committee and subsequently included in the HLCM business practices proposal.

100. The Chair recalled that HLCM, at its videoconference in November 2006, had agreed that the Information and Communication Technology Network should proceed with two studies to determine the value of common services in the area of data communications and data centre operations, at an estimated cost of $250,000 each. The study on common data communications had completed the procurement process, with an inter-agency selection panel recommending a vendor to perform the study. The price quote for the study from the vendor selected was $525,000, far exceeding the original estimate of $250,000. The study on shared data centre operations had gone out for bid in August 2007 and, as of the deadline, no vendors had responded. Some had indicated an interest, however, and the Information and Communication Technology Network would consider its approach to that study in the coming weeks.

101. The Information and Communication Technology Network sought the guidance of HLCM on whether to (a) increase its commitment to completing the data communications study, (b) proceed with only one of the two planned studies at this time and seek other funding for the other, or (c) fully fund those studies through the business practices proposal process.

Conclusions and action points

102. The Committee agreed to allocate the full budget originally estimated for the two studies on data communications and data centre operations to the study on common data communications while pursuing the study on data centre operations through the business practices proposal process. The Chair of the Information and Communication Technology Network reminded the Committee that the data communications study required funding before it could proceed and urged all agencies to quickly come forward with their contributions.

D. Finance and budget issues

103. The Committee considered a progress report by the Co-Chair of the Finance and Budget Network and Chair of the Task Force on Accounting Standards, Jay Karia, on the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) implementation project, with particular reference to issues of immediate relevance to the management of United Nations organizations participating in the project, such as IPSAS training and communication to internal and external stakeholders.

104. In the area of training, there were plans to develop IPSAS training packages that could be used system-wide by all organizations. The first phase of the development process had been completed in May, when the results of a training survey completed by organizations were analysed for input into specifications for those training packages. Phase 2, which involved the procurement of IPSAS training packages, was now under way, while in phase 3 each organization would plan and deliver IPSAS training using the system-wide packages.

105. The report also provided an overview of the progress made by United Nations system organizations in implementing the IPSAS project, as well as a recommendation to "roll forward" project funds from 2006-2007 into 2008-2009.

106. Five critical implementation steps were identified that all organizations would need to complete by the end of 2007 if they realistically expect to meet the 2010 target date for IPSAS adoption. The majority of organizations had not completed these five critical steps by the end of July 2007. Of particular concern was the lack of approved budgets, the lack of project staff working full-time on the transition and the lack of a comprehensive project plan. Those concerns should not overshadow the great deal of progress that had been made compared to the same time last year.

107. Steady progress continued to be made on the adoption of IPSAS in the United Nations system. The harmonization of accounting policies and the possible harmonization of financial regulations and rules would also be a positive outcome of IPSAS adoption. The IPSAS Steering Committee, the Task Force on Accounting Standards and the Finance and Budget Network would continue to take actions on various items, monitor progress, identify emerging issues and, where required, formulate further system-wide actions. Biannual progress reports would continue to be provided to HLCM.

Conclusions and action points

108. The Committee approved the recommended roll-forward of any remaining 2006-2007 unencumbered funds for the IPSAS project into 2008-2009, as outlined in detail in paragraphs 16 to 19 of CEB/2007/HLCM/25.

109. The Committee took note with appreciation of the progress report and invited the Task Force on Accounting Standards and the IPSAS Project Team to report again to HLCM at its next session.

E. Human resources issues

110. The Human Resources Network Co-Spokesperson, Ms. Dufresne-Klaus, briefed the Committee on the Network's fourteenth session, which was held in Geneva from 4 to 6 July 2007.

111. In addition to the two proposals that were being discussed separately — "UN cares" and dual career and staff mobility (see sects. IX and X below) — the Human Resources Network reviewed other key issues, as set out below.

(a) With respect to long-term care, a working group is reviewing this complicated issue, focusing on eligibility, benefit level control, a common implementation scheme, financial implications and other related aspects. This is an important issue for staff, as agencies implement different schemes and eligibility criteria. As the costs involved are high, there is significant resistance from a number of organizations to any proposal that could result in an increase in after-service liability;

(b) The issue of stress counsellors was brought to the attention of the Network by the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Safety and Security. The Department called for the assistance of the Network in addressing the tension that exists among stress counsellors on issues of doctrine and the need to review stress-counselling methods. The Network will review the counselling strategy, including the need for a common approach to brain trauma, a war-related trauma frequently seen in for example, Iraq, for which treatment costs $1 million per year per affected individual;

(c) The Human Resources Network was briefed by the United Nations Medical Director on behalf of the Medical Doctors Network. The Medical Doctors Network is of the view that there is a need to review the medical management structure. A number of organizations are shifting their medical strategy from a Headquarters-based structure to a field-based structure by appointing regional medical doctors to oversee and coordinate medical care in the field. A proposal will be submitted by the Medical Network that is likely to have financial implications for the United Nations system as a whole;

(d) In the area of the harmonization and reform of business practices, the Network established four priority areas: contractual arrangements; inter-agency mobility; the Senior Management Network; and the leadership development programme.

112. The eight "Delivering as one" pilot projects have made it possible to identify many human resources issues, including contracts for local staff, performance assessment policies and job classification. The Network agreed that it needed to address those issues as soon as possible and try to harmonize, to the maximum possible extent, its policies, rules, procedures and systems. The Network plans to visit one of the pilot duty stations in early 2008 so as to better understand current needs and pressing issues.

Conclusions and action points

113. The Committee noted its appreciation for the work carried out by the Human Resources Network and supported the priority areas selected. Furthermore, the Committee encouraged the Network to examine human resources issues related to the eight "Delivering as one" pilot projects and requested coordination with the Finance and Budget Network on any financial impact that the projects under review might have.

IX. "UN cares"

114. Speaking in her capacity as Human Resources Network co-spokesperson, the representative of the United Nations, Ms. Lopez, introduced the "UN cares" proposal to the Committee. She explained that since 1999 a great deal of work had been done by various organizations in the area of HIV/AIDS in the workplace. In many cases, there had been a duplication of efforts. The Human Resources Network therefore believed that it was very important to unify all of the efforts and to adopt a more strategic approach. The Network sought HLCM approval to merge all initiatives into one, under one budget, in order to be more cost-efficient and effective. That would also provide an opportunity for organizations with limited funds to be part of a consolidated programme.

115. The Network presented five basic issues for approval: (a) the adoption of 10 minimum standards; (b) implementation strategy based on unifying all initiatives under one budget; (c) the 2008-2009 programme of work; (d) the budget for 2008-2009, as well as a cost-sharing formula; and (e) retention of global coordination functions in New York, hosted at UNFPA.

116. The Network believed that it was very important to convey to staff the message that organizations are united in this effort.

117. In various statements, representatives of organizations as well as the Co-Chair of the Finance and Budget Network strongly supported the principles of the "UN cares" programme and encouraged organizations to look at internal ways of financing this kind of activity, as HIV/AIDS in the workplace is a staff issue that needs to be mainstreamed into the regular budgets.

Conclusions and action points

118. The Committee endorsed the minimum standards, approved the "UN cares" programme and agreed that global coordination functions for the programme would remain in New York, hosted by UNFPA. Furthermore, it endorsed the implementation strategy within the resources available, based on the voluntary contributions committed by organizations.

119. The Committee noted with appreciation the commitment made by certain organizations to provide funding at a later stage, through their 2010-2011 budgets, and encouraged all HLCM members to devote the necessary attention to the issue of HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

X. United Nations dual career and staff mobility

120. The Human Resources Network co-spokesperson presented the United Nations dual-career and staff mobility proposal. The programme has been managed by WFP since 2004. The purpose of the programme is to assist spouses of international staff in finding employment, obtaining work permits and settling in new locations at the various duty stations worldwide.

121. The Human Resources Network considered that this support was vital to ensure the success of mandatory rotation. Dual-career couples are a reality in today's world. Spousal employment therefore promotes the recruitment, retention and reassignment of professional staff and is an issue of importance for the United Nations system as a whole.

122. The Human Resources Network requested HLCM to endorse (a) the continuation of the programme; (b) the implementation strategy for expansion of the programme to a United Nations system-wide programme and its move to the CEB secretariat effective 1 January 2008; (c) the 2008-2009 proposed programme of work; and (d) the 2008 -2009 budget and cost-sharing formula.

123. Many participants recognized the overall importance of the programme, but were not able to commit financial support. Others could not commit their full share.

124. The Committee therefore considered the possibility of funding the dual-career programme on a voluntary basis, limited to the current financial commitments offered by organizations, which would allow a scaled-down version of the programme to continue, pending consideration by other organizations to provide funding later.

125. The CEB secretariat indicated that the proposal would be acceptable only upon confirmation of the financial commitments made by organizations, limited to a scaled-down version of the programme, and with the clear understanding that such an approach was not sustainable within the current budgetary framework of the CEB secretariat.

Conclusions and action points

126. The Committee supported the United Nations dual-career and staff mobility programme, its continuation on the basis of voluntary contributions from organizations and its move to the CEB secretariat in Geneva as from 1 January 2008.

127. The CEB secretariat accepted the proposal pending confirmation of the financial commitments declared by organizations, limited to a scaled-down version of the programme outlined in document CEB/2007/HLCM/21, commensurate with the resources to be committed by organizations.

XI. Senior Management Network Leadership Programme

128. The representative of the United Nations System Staff College briefed the Committee on the status of the Senior Management Network Leadership Programme (SMNP). He recalled that agencies should now be selecting participants for the Programme. Participants would be drawn from the membership of the Senior Management Network. The national Network membership by agency and participant numbers for each SMNP cohort are contained in document CEB/2007/HLCM/24. The Human Resources Network had been invited to assist executive heads in the selection process.

129. Participants should be identified by 30 September 2007. Each SMNP cohort would comprise 49 Senior Management Network members, which should provide a good mix of agencies, genders, nationalities and functions. Furthermore, agencies should select enthusiastic people who would contribute to the programme. The first programme would be held in the Netherlands from 25 to 29 November 2007. There would be four cohorts each year from 2008 onwards. Agencies should also allocate funds for participation in the SMNP for 2008-2009. The cost for participation per person is $8,236 plus airfare and daily subsistence allowance.

130. In view of the fact that the Staff College had made a financial commitment to the Rotterdam School of Management, the College noted that it was taking a financial risk based on the stated commitment of all agencies to participate in the SMNP. In that regard, the Staff College representative emphasized that HLCM members should stand by their commitment, identify participants early and ensure participation in scheduled programmes.

Conclusions and action points

131. The Committee encouraged organizations to submit candidates for the SMNP, allocate the necessary funds for participation and support the programme internally through the most appropriate communications mechanisms.

XII. Jointly financed activities

132. In the conclusions of its thirteenth session, held in March 2007, the Committee recommended that the CEB secretariat prepare a list of all HLCM cost-shared activities, including the amounts subject to cost-sharing and the criteria used for the apportionment of such costs among organizations.

133. In response to that request, the CEB secretariat prepared a review of the methodologies used for the apportionment of the costs of jointly financed activities, providing some background on the discussion that led to the agreement on such methodologies.

134. In introducing document CEB/2007/HLCM/22/Rev.1, the CEB secretariat recalled that all cost-sharing arrangements outlined in the document had been already approved by the Committee at different times and were being presented for information purposes only.

135. The current funding arrangements for the "UN cares" and the dual-career and staff mobility programmes were based on voluntary contributions by some member organizations, and any proposals for new approaches were subject to the Committee's review and approval (see sects. IX and X above).

136. Table 5 in the annex to the document summarized the apportionment of costs for the United Nations Security Management System for the biennium 2008-2009 among participating organizations, as resulting from the recently revised cost-sharing arrangements. Staff data in the table was from the headcount of field staff as at 31 December 2006 carried out by the CEB secretariat on 12 July 2007. Results from the headcount were provisional and subject to clearance by organizations.

137. A revised version of document CEB/2007/HLCM/22/Rev.1, with all cost-sharing budgets and corresponding organizations' shares, would be produced by the CEB secretariat by 20 October 2007.

138. The Committee also briefly discussed the recommendation made by its Finance and Budget Network for the clarification and reinforcement of the consultative mechanisms through which United Nations system organizations provide their input into the budgeting process of jointly financed activities, in particular at the stage of programme of work definition and budget formulation, that is, before budget proposals are finalized and approved.

Conclusions and action points

139. The Committee further endorsed the cost-sharing arrangements for jointly financed activities, as outlined in document CEB/2007/HLCM/22/Rev.1. It further decided that, with respect to the Security Management System, no individual, separate arrangements should be maintained and that the shares of the Asian Development Bank and of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development should be calculated based on the formula and criteria used for the other System participants.

140. The Committee reiterated the recommendation that the organizations administering the cost-sharing arrangements should make sure that unspent balances for any given biennium were credited directly to the amount due by organizations participating in the cost-shared activities for the following biennium. The review of the 2006-2007 biennium should be carried out by the administering organization at the earliest possible time to assess the level of rollover from the accumulated savings and enable participating organizations to evaluate any budgetary implications.

141. The Committee affirmed that, with respect to the definition of the programme of work of jointly financed activities and to the formulation and approval of their programme budgets, a more participatory and consultative approach was desirable

that would involve all organizations providing mandatory or voluntary financial support to such activities.

142. As per its mandate, the Finance and Budget Network should take responsibility for cost-sharing formulas and the review of jointly financed budgets included in any proposals submitted to HLCM.

XIII. Procedures and criteria for the preparation of agendas and submission of documents for consideration and discussion by the High-level Committee on Management at its session

143. At its thirteenth session, HLCM heard comments by several organizations suggesting that stricter criteria be adopted for the submission of documents for consideration and discussion by the Committee at its sessions. Such criteria should include both a limit to the length of documents and a deadline for the submission of documents for circulation prior to meetings.

144. Such comments met with wide support in the Committee. In particular, it was underlined that compliance with similar self-imposed criteria would greatly facilitate the efforts of the Committee in carrying out its mandate, which, pursuant to its terms of reference, includes acting on behalf of and in the name of CEB on matters affecting the administrative management of all member organizations and taking decisions on behalf of the executive heads.

145. The Committee therefore asked the CEB secretariat to draft procedures and criteria for the preparation of agendas and for the submission of documents for consideration and discussion by HLCM at its sessions and to submit such proposal to the Committee for approval at its next session.

146. The CEB secretariat outlined the guidelines proposed in its document.

Conclusions and action points

147. The Committee endorsed the criteria outlined in document CEB/2007/HLCM/26.

XIV. Other business

A. Establishment of a United Nations system-wide evaluation mechanism

148. At the HLCM/HLCP joint session of March 2007, the Chair of the United Nations Evaluation Group presented a note that discussed existing evaluation capacities, areas for improvement and proposals for system-wide action.

149. Member organizations welcomed the Group's proposal and highlighted the need to further elaborate on the scope, funding and governance of the suggested system-wide evaluation unit. The Group was requested to expand on those aspects of the proposal in cooperation with the CEB secretariat, to take account of the comments provided and to present a revised version of its paper to the two Committees.

150. In response to the request made by HLCM, the Group prepared a follow-up paper on the subject (CEB/2007/HLCM/27), which the Chair of the Group introduced to the Committee.

151. In conjunction with that proposal, HLCP considered another document submitted by the Evaluation Group concerning an evaluation of the pilot initiatives for "Delivering as one" (CEB/2007/HLCPXIV/CRP.13).

152. The Evaluation Group's paper described the responsibilities, resource requirements and institutional arrangements and governance of a proposed system-wide evaluation unit whose objectives would be to promote transparency, accountability and learning in the United Nations system as a whole and its effectiveness in delivering on system-wide goals, including those set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (see resolution 55/2).

153. A critical point highlighted in the document was the fact that, to ensure credibility, any United Nations-wide evaluation system must be independent in its work. However, its evaluations should meet the priority needs of stakeholders, including the general public in Member States. The development of an evaluation capacity, including a culture of independent evaluation, should be promoted in Member States so that they can increasingly take the lead in the evaluation of programmes designed for their benefit.

154. The paper led to a productive discussion among participants, and different views were expressed.

155. There was general agreement among member organizations that evaluation was one of the major drivers for system-wide coherence and a critical element in promoting transparency and accountability in United Nations system activities and that the idea of a system-wide evaluation mechanism was one whose time had come.

156. A number of organizations were in favour of an early start of the proposed system-wide unit, possibly using a phased approach for the implementation of the work programme of the unit. The Evaluation Group expressed full agreement with the idea of a phased start-up.

157. Others suggested drawing on the experience of the ad hoc evaluation of the "Delivering as one" pilots, whose lessons would be very valuable in the formulation and implementation of the appropriate framework for the evaluation of system-wide activities.

158. Several organizations stated that, in any case, decisions on such matters would require the approval of their governing bodies.

159. On the issue of funding, several organizations expressed reservations about the possibility of committing resources at this time, and others suggested that funding for evaluation be provided from the respective programme resources.

160. One participant felt that the current ad hoc arrangements for system-wide evaluation seemed to work well. That view was not shared by other participants or the representative of the Group, who explained that the "One United Nations" pilot evaluation that had been requested by the CEB had been initiated, but that the experience was difficult. The Group had established a management group that was imposing a major workload on participating directors of evaluation over and above

their own organizational responsibilities, and securing funding for the evaluation had continued to be difficult, adding to managerial problems.

161. It was agreed that HLCM would highlight for the CEB the continuing importance of the matter of establishing a United Nations system-wide evaluation mechanism while recording the differences of opinion on implementation.

Conclusions and action points

162. The Committee recommended that the Evaluation Group continue to work on the development of a proposal for consideration at its next session. The Group could elaborate further on phasing options in the start-up and work programme and on arrangements for funding the core evaluation capacity and individual evaluations. HLCM would examine alternatives that included proceeding on the basis of a cluster approach.

163. The Committee also agreed that this would remain a "live agenda item" at future sessions of HLCM and HLCP.

164. The Committee encouraged HLCM members to work to build internal support for this initiative in their respective organizations and to provide feedback to the Evaluation Group in the coming months on their views and positions in order to actively contribute to the design of a proposal that could meet with broad support at the next inter-agency discussion.

B. Proposal by the Environment Management Group on a United Nations climate-neutrality project

165. The Director of the Environment Management Group briefed the Committee on the Group's proposal on climate neutrality in the United Nations system. The proposal outlined in the Group's paper had been previously discussed in the High-level Committee on Programmes, which judged that the proposal had considerable management implications and therefore requested HLCM to take it up for initial review.

166. Following the 2006 and 2007 meetings of the Secretary-General's Policy Committee, the Group was requested to take a leading role in making the United Nations climate-neutral.

167. In a letter dated 9 July 2007, addressed to the executive heads of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the Secretary-General stated his pledge to make in-house practices more climate-friendly and environmentally sustainable and to develop a climate-neutral approach for the Organization's premises and operations.

168. The Group established an open-ended Issue Management Group on climate neutrality, which met from 25 to 27 June 2007 in Washington, D.C. An Issue Management Group on sustainable procurement also met during that period.

169. At that meeting, the Environment Management Group was asked to prepare a draft statement to be approved by the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system on a climate-neutral United Nations, as well as a related background strategy paper to support the draft statement.

170. Annex I to the document contained a draft text on a political commitment to be made by the executive heads of agencies in response to the initiative of the Secretary-General. The strategy paper contained in annex II was meant to provide analytical support for the statement contained in annex I.

171. In addition to those annexes, the Environment Management Group was in the process of preparing an initial, first-order estimate of each organization's inventory of greenhouse-gas emissions for those member organizations that are in a position to provide such information. That preliminary inventory would be available to the 8 October meeting of the Group.

172. The Group's proposed strategy to make the United Nations system climate-neutral consists of (a) implementing measures to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions on an ongoing basis, as part of a plan containing targets, and (b) offsetting the remaining greenhouse-gas emissions.

173. The Environment Management Group asked the Committee to endorse its proposal. It also asked organizations to commit to a number of actions to be taken internally and externally.

174. In the discussion that followed, member organizations made several comments and suggestions, including on the possibility of reviewing the language of the statement contained in annex I, so as to take better account of the political implications of the issue.

175. Many participants also suggested that any proposal to that effect, which clearly would have major implications for the management and functioning of organizations, would have to be formulated so as to include reliable estimates of implementation costs and an indication of the criteria used to calculate such costs.

176. The Committee also suggested the development of a more comprehensive plan of action that would enable organizations to better evaluate the impact of the proposal on their ability to deliver on their programmatic mandates.

Conclusions and action points

177. The Committee took note of the proposal made by the Environment Management Group and of the principles contained therein.

178. The Committee suggested that the Group continue its work on the draft paper, taking account of the comments provided by organizations during the discussion, namely on the financial implications and detailed modalities of the recommended actions.

179. HLCM members would brief the executive heads and appropriate representatives of their respective organizations in view of the upcoming Group meeting on 8 October and the meeting of the CEB on 26 and 27 October.

C. Ethics in the United Nations system

180. The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Kemal Dervis, was invited by the Committee to offer his views on recent developments related the issue of ethics.

181. It was clear that although a certain degree of informality and an unstructured approach had characterized the work of United Nations system organizations in the past, it was no longer sustainable given the significant increase in the magnitude of the activities being carried out, in terms of actual value and scope, and in view of the delegation of decision-making and implementation authority to numerous locations throughout the world.

182. Three dimensions were indicated as being relevant to the concept of ethics in the context of an organization: a personal dimension (financial disclosure and certification processes, inter alia); an advisory dimension (training, conflict of interest and so on); and a third one relating to the structures, modalities and mechanisms for the identification and handling of allegations of misconduct and actual cases thereof.

183. Those three dimensions, particularly the first two, are clear indications that there is a need to develop harmonized approaches, common guidelines and procedures and to share experiences and best practices among United Nations system organizations so as to enable them to learn from one another and avoid any duplication of effort.

184. Robert Benson, the newly appointed Director of the United Nations Ethics Office, who was invited to participate in the discussion, also offered his views on some of the issues raised. In particular, he emphasized the fact that the United Nations system, as the pre-eminent public-sector entity, had to lead the way in terms of public-sector ethics and that the job of the Ethics Office was being carried out in the interests of the Organization, not in the interests of management, individuals or the staff associations.

Conclusions and action points

185. The Committee thanked the Administrator of UNDP and the Chief of the Ethics Office for their valuable contribution to the discussion and made a commitment to continuing to devote the necessary attention to this critical matter, including from any perspective that could be relevant at the system-wide, inter-agency level.

Annex I

List of participants

Chairperson: Thoraya Obaid (United Nations Population Fund)

Vice-Chair: Denis Aitken (World Health Organization)

(Acting) Secretary: Remo Lalli (Chief Executives Board secretariat)

United Nations

Alicia Barcena Ibarra (Under-Secretary-General, Department of Management)

David Veness (Under-Secretary-General, Department of Safety and Security)

Nicolas Michel (Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and Legal Counsel; Chair of the HLCM Legal Network)

Warren Sach (Assistant Secretary-General and Controller)

Robert Benson (Director, Ethics Office)

Jay Karia (Director, Accounts Division, and Co-Chair of the Finance and Budget Network)

Martha Helena Lopez (Chief, Policy, Office of Human Resources; Co-Chair of the Human Resources Network)

Neeta Tolani (Executive Officer, Department of Safety and Security)

Patricia Georget (Legal Officer, Office of Legal Affairs)

International Labour Organization

Jan Sorensen (Senior Policy Adviser, United Nations Reform and Development Cooperation)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Khalid Mehboob (Assistant Director-General, Department of Human, Financial and Physical Resources)

David Benfield (Director, Information Systems and Technology Division, Knowledge and Communications Department)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Dyane Dufresne-Klaus (Director, Bureau of Human Resources Management; Co-Chair of the Human Resources Network)

Yolande Valle (Director, Bureau of Budget)

Universal Postal Union

Guozhong Huang (Deputy Director-General)

International Telecommunication Union

Yajaira Freudiger (Chief, Human Resources Administration Division)

International Maritime Organization

Andrew Winbow (Director, Administrative Division)

World Health Organization

Denis Aitken (Assistant Director-General; Representative of the Director-General for Partnerships and United Nations Reform)

Namita Pradhan (Assistant Director-General, General Management)

Susan Holck (Director, General Management)

World Bank

Robert V. Pulley (Director, General Services Department)

World Intellectual Property Organization

Carlos Mazal (Senior Counsellor)

International Fund for Agricultural Development

Jessie Rose Mabutas (Assistant President, Finance and Administration Department)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Jang-Won Suh (Managing Director, Programme Support and General Management Division)

Amita Misra (Director, Financial Services Branch, Division of Administration)

Sotiria Antonopoulou (Director, Human Resources Management Branch)

United Nations World Tourism Organization

Peter Shackleford (Director, Administration Division)

International Atomic Energy Agency

Tracy Brown (Liaison Officer, New York)

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Oluseye Oduyemi (Director, Division of Management)

United Nations Development Programme

Kemal Dervis (Administrator)

Akiko Yuge (Assistant Administrator and Director of Bureau of Management)

Thomas Eriksson (Chief of Staff, a.i., Bureau of Management)

Saraswathi Menon (Director of the Evaluation Office; Chair, United Nations Evaluation Group)

James Provenzano (Representative of the HLCM Procurement Network)

United Nations Children's Fund

Omar Abdi (Deputy Executive Director)

Catty Bennet (Executive Officer, Office of the Executive Director)

Claus Andreasen (Director, Internal Audit, Representative of United Nations-RIAS)

United Nations Population Fund

Thoraya Obaid (Executive Director)

Subhash K. Gupta (Director, Division for Management Services)

Klaus Beck (Special Assistant to the Deputy Executive Director (Management))

Laurie Newell (Global Coordinator, "UN cares")

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Emmy Takahashi (Senior Policy Adviser, UNHCR, New York Office)

United Nations Environment Programme

Janos Pasztor (Director, Environment Management Group)

United Nations Office at Vienna/United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Franz Baumann (Deputy Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna and Director for Management, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)

World Food Programme

Susana Malcorra (Deputy Executive Director, Chair of the Information and Communication Technology Network)

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

Deborah Landey (Deputy Executive Director)

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Antoine King (Director, Programme Support Division)

International Trade Centre

Eva K. Murray (Director, Division of Programme Support)

United Nations Office for Project Services

Vitaly Vanshelboim (Deputy Executive Director)

United Nations System Staff College

Michael Alford (Head, Liaison Office, Geneva; Coordinator, Leadership Development Programmes)

International Civil Service Commission

Kingston Rhodes (Chairman)

Wolfgang Stoeckl (Vice-Chairman)

John Hamilton (Executive Secretary, International Civil Service Commission secretariat)

Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations system

Rita Wallace (President, United Nations Children's Fund, New York Staff Union)

Ronald Hall (President, Field Staff Union)

Federation of International Civil Servants Associations

Robert Weisell (President)

Chief Executives Board secretariat

Adnan Admin (Director)

Remo Lalli (Acting Secretary, High-level Committee on Management)

Marta Leichner-Boyce (Senior Inter-Agency Adviser, Human Resources Management)

Laura Casinelli (High-level Committee on Management Support)

Annex II

Statement by the President of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations

1. The President of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) noted that the federation and the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) had not had the opportunity to review their respective notes with each other but, having heard of the position of CCISUA on the seven points or issues, he could confirm that there was general agreement on their importance and on the positions taken.

2. He noted that, as had been mentioned by several members of HLCM in referring to the diversity of the various United Nations organizations, staff members themselves constituted a very disparate and diverse group. In addition, such heterogeneity was increasing, and that in turn increased the difficulty of providing unified staff representation. FICSA was particularly concerned about the effects on staff representation of outsourcing, offshoring and other administrative initiatives. He said that the question was, who would be (and who was) representing these people, who, in some cases, are not considered staff. FICSA noted that it had been preoccupied with assisting staff from what might be described as hybrid and very small organizations that had been created and become operational before the necessary administrative mechanisms and policies had been put in place. That had often resulted in the absence of adequate redress procedures, leading to discontent and distraction. The "One United Nations" and, at the present time, the eight pilots of the "Delivering as one" strategy have important implications for staff representation. For example, would a World Health Organization (WHO) staff member working in a "Delivering as one" unified office still relate to and be represented by the WHO Staff Association in the region, or would there be another structure for staff representation within the unified office? Most importantly, would such a new approach to staff representation be robust, independent and effective? The President closed by observing that perhaps the presence of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee (SMCC), which accommodated and involved United Nations Secretariat and funds and programmes staff in developing agreed human resources and administrative procedures but did not include the rest of the United Nations staff, was not the way to continue in future, particularly with the emphasis on "One United Nations" and "Delivering as one".

3. The representative of FICSA then turned to a very pressing issue with which the federation and CEB had been struggling for the past six months. He was requested first to provide background on the subject. The issue was the expressed inability of the two relatively small organizations of which the two candidates nominated for General Secretary were staff members to release them for that position with continued full financial support, if elected. At the time of the sixtieth FICSA Council in February 2007, the candidate from the International Maritime Organization (IMO) had withdrawn owing to the prospect of there being no release with full pay, and, while the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) candidate was duly elected, unresolved delays in her release resulted in her resignation as General Secretary. That unsatisfactory situation resulted in an intense dialogue with the Human Resources Network and a review of the discussions held from 1977 to 1983 between FICSA and the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions

on the release of the President and General Secretary of FICSA and on the possibility of initiating a cost-sharing payment scheme.

4. The group was informed that during the last few months, largely at the urging and as a result of the involvement of the CEB secretariat and spokesperson, IMO had developed a two-year payment plan for the IMO candidate who had been renominated for the by-elections, to be implemented most probably in the near future. However, WMO had been unable to arrive at its own solution, and it was unclear how this would be resolved satisfactorily. The President stressed that it was important that release be ensured for all candidates, since, if that were not the case, the complete and open democratic process would be violated. It was agreed that while it was important to reach a solution to the immediate problem, a longer-term, more viable solution needed to be developed, and the Human Resources Network agreed to address this issue through a small working group.

Annex III

Statement by the Vice-President of the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System

1. I am here representing thousands of dedicated staff members throughout the organization who work in the following organizations: the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat (Field Staff Union), the International Labour Organization, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations University.

2. As staff, we are as diverse as the mandates of our individual organizations, but we are united in our passion for the work of the United Nations. As a federation of staff unions and associations, we in the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) are governed by the imperatives that staff deserve the Organization's protection, regard, acknowledgement and consideration. We all are affected by the momentous changes that are taking place throughout the United Nations, from the effects of United Nations reform to standardization of contracts and issues as mundane as common accounting standards. Everything will have an effect on staff, and we believe that it is in the interest of the health of the Organization as a whole to ensure that staff have all the help they need to move forward in recreating the United Nations into an Organization whose relevance in the twenty-first century will never be questioned.

3. We need to draw the attention of the Committee to several areas where we are especially challenged, as set out below.

(a) Concerning staff security, it is no secret that in some countries United Nations staff are extremely vulnerable and are sometimes targeted by national groups or individuals because of the very work we do. We note the efforts made across the Organization to improve the safety and security of our staff and look forward to the discussion on the security paper. We must highlight the issue of the unequal treatment of national versus international staff in the area of security, which still requires a solution. We believe that the mission of the United Nations should not be compromised by the insecurity of any of our staff, whatever their category. The United Nations cannot continue to allow its staff to be killed when civil conflict or war breaks out on the premise that the security of national staff is not the responsibility of the United Nations. We leave our staff at the mercy of State actors that may not have the same respect for human life as the United Nations purports to have. We must ensure protection of our national staff whenever their lives are in danger and take appropriate measures, which should include evacuation where warranted;

(b) With respect to contracts, CCISUA supports the proposal of the Secretary-General that there be a standard series of contracts applicable to all United Nations staff across the board, with no diminution in benefits or acquired rights for existing staff, that will at the same time allow the United Nations to attract and retain highly skilled staff. The United Nations should also be able to reward long-term staff members. In that regard, CCISUA supports the position expressed by the Staff-Management Coordination Committee at its meeting earlier this year in Cyprus;

(c) The issue of job security is closely linked to that of contracts. Across the organizations we represent, there is talk of outsourcing staff functions. Often our executive heads are following recommendations from outside consultants who have little knowledge of the work of the Organization and its impact or of the unique position of the United Nations. Such recommendations sometimes lead to decisions that are not well thought out and that can have a radically negative effect on the work of the Organization. We recommend to our management that staff should participate fully in discussions on outsourcing, so that all the ramifications may be considered;

(d) In terms of mobility, any mobility policy must be voluntary and must balance staff needs against those of the Organizations. It would need to be accompanied by training, take into account the family situation of the staff member concerned, be linked to incentives and promote career development. Implementation of the policy must not be "mechanical" or forced. We support the efforts being made to formalize and build a dual-career policy because we believe that spousal employment is key to a successful mobility policy;

(e) Staff development, including the development of staff unions and associations, is extremely important. Existing staff need the help of the Organization in supporting and encouraging professional development, which will enable the staff to be flexible, mobile and better able to serve the Organization. We note the plan for the Senior Management Network Leadership Programme and believe that it should be extended to include any staff Chairperson who is in, or entitled to, full-time release. Under the Leadership Programme, any staff Chairperson who is in full-time release fits these criteria: a large number of staff, involvement in policy discussions and so on. We request that this proposal be seriously considered. Training of staff representatives at all levels is sorely needed, and we believe that this would be a good starting point;

(f) Turning to the effect on staff of "One United Nations", much of the impact of the "One United Nations" initiative is being felt in the field, and in particular in the eight "One United Nations" pilot countries. In these instances, staff need as much protection as can be afforded. There continues to be a lack of clarity as to the best way forward in implementing "One United Nations", with the various agencies adopting different methods. We believe that there should be coherence and consistency in the treatment of staff in the eight United Nations pilot countries, especially as these are supposed to be the models for the future roll-out of more "One United Nations" duty stations;

(g) On the issue of salary survey methodology, our staff are worthy of a living wage. In some countries, especially those emerging from war or civil conflict or those that have had serious economic problems, the Fleming principle is not working due a lack of comparators and a lack of flexibility in the salary survey

methodology. As a result, hundreds of our staff members are unable to provide for their children despite the fact that they work for an Organization dedicated to humanity and fairness. Given that the methodology is scheduled to be revised in 2008, we intend to coordinate efforts with FICSA to ensure that staff receive a living wage wherever they serve in the Organization. We ask for and expect the support of our managers in ensuring that we have a new methodology that will work for all our staff.

4. These are only a few of the issues that we could raise, but we will leave it at that in the interests of time.

Annex IV

Statement by the Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission

1. I am delighted to be here today to share with all present the vision of the members of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) for stronger partnerships and improved cooperation with the CEB, staff representatives and organizations of the United Nations common system.

2. Both the Vice-Chairman, Wolfgang Stoeckl, and I, who are not in any sense new to the Commission or its recent history, decided together upon our appointments that for ICSC to succeed as a strategic organization within the common system, it would need strengthened partnership with organizations. Shortly after taking up office and with this in mind, we first met with the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and then with the heads of the other New York-based agencies. Those contacts were subsequently followed up with visits to the Vienna-based organizations, where we met with their respective executive heads, directors of human resources and other key officers in the human resources function. The objective was to listen and learn so as to identify and better understand the challenges facing the organizations.

3. Just before commencing our latest session in Geneva and as part of the effort to strengthen partnerships, we requested a special meeting between commissioners and representatives of executive heads of the Geneva-based organizations. During that meeting, participants suggested that the presence of ICSC in forums such as this should be encouraged. We are happy to be here, and we are grateful to have been invited. We believe that it would be mutually beneficial for us to participate in some sessions of the governing bodies of individual organizations at which recommendations or decisions of ICSC on core issues are being considered. We hope that by doing so we can generate greater understanding between us.

4. In July, the Commission, together with the members of its secretariat, convened a retreat with a view to re-examining its role and seeking ways in which we could become more proactive through improved relationships with all our partners. I am here today to provide a briefing on the outcome of our discussion as it concerns the improvement of cooperation with the CEB and the organizations of the United Nations.

5. At the retreat there was a strong and unanimous commitment to change, and we identified a number of important goals towards which we have begun to work. It was acknowledged that in order to be successful as a Commission and as organizations, we needed to go beyond reacting to the changes around us. Change should be anticipated and embraced. Acknowledging also that success of the common system required both coherence and flexibility, the Commission pledged to seek better ways to make itself a strategic partner with the organizations of the common system and to facilitate human resources departments in the organizations' quest to become more responsive to changes in the business environment. We have committed ourselves to working towards coordination among all our stakeholders in order to achieve more coherent and effective human resources management across the common system.

6. The Commission has also decided to hold shorter formal sessions and increase the use of informal meetings, introducing "task groups" and utilizing forums such as retreats. We feel that this will be more efficient in terms of the time spent away from their desks by the human resources managers of organizations who attend our sessions. The use of retreats will open up the deliberations of the Commission and provide for frank discussions, given the more informal atmosphere. We will continue to utilize working groups to analyse complex issues. This collaborative approach has proved extremely useful as a means of building confidence and understanding. In order to remain in sync with our partners, we will be giving priority to those issues which organizations pinpoint as being of high value to them and the future of the common system. Included are such areas as performance management and mobility and other measures to promote increased productivity and efficiency within organizations.

7. Our action plan, developed as a guide to our future performance to assist us with streamlining our working methods and thus make more effective use of available resources, addresses the development of the Commission's policy capacity over time and strategies to strengthen the consultation process with organizations and staff, building consensus and developing modalities so as to expedite decision-making, including more timely and precise responses to the General Assembly and to other governing bodies.

8. Our expectations for the future work of the Commission are about leading change, building trust and maintaining the unity of a common system that is modern, equitable, dynamic and merit-based, with human resources systems in place to secure, grow and retain managers and staff of the highest possible calibre. We are looking forward to working very closely with our partners to effect change in the direction I have just described. A look at the Committee's agenda for today reveals that in many instances the Committee and the Commission are occupied with the same concerns and that, indeed, we share the same objectives — greater cohesion across the United Nations common system; greater mobility among common system employees; making the United Nations organizations employers of choice by adopting best practices from within and outside of the common system; and the minimization of competition for high-quality staff among United Nations organizations.

9. Nonetheless, our secretariats are at present operating to some degree in isolation from, if not at cross-purposes with, one another. I am aware that in the past, in our efforts to preserve equity across the common system and to facilitate business in such a way as to avoid dissension and competition, we have not always been able to satisfy everyone, thus engendering a certain measure of dissatisfaction. The organizations of the United Nations have such dissimilar functional roles and responsibilities that it often seems that decisions made by ICSC do not always meet the interests of all organizations and staff of the common system and are sometimes deemed not feasible for implementation by some of them. Sometimes these are brought to the attention of the Commission and its secretariat, sometimes not.

10. I hope that this will not be so in future. We hope to work with the CEB and the organizations in very tangible ways. For instance, we hope to work with the Committee to create a solid human resources database with a view to improving the exchange of information and data between ICSC, CEB and the organizations of the common system.

11. Continuing on the subject of working together, I noticed that one of the projects being proposed by the CEB secretariat is a comparative analysis of the staff regulations and rules of the organizations. We welcome this initiative and would be willing to participate in or to facilitate any aspects of the project that, in the Committee's view, would help to enhance or expedite it. As a matter of fact, we had ourselves intended to request organizations to provide us with updated versions of their staff regulations and rules. This, we felt, would be more efficient than requesting organizations to update us from time to time on their practices and would empower the Commission and its secretariat to analyse and share best practices among the several organizations of the common system. Not only is this in line with article 15 of our Statute, it would put the Commission in a pivotal position to add value to the development of human resources within the common system. Our secretariat will, of course, consult with the CEB secretariat before proceeding, to avoid asking organizations twice for the same data.

12. Finally, change is a process. The United Nations will not become fast, flexible and coordinated overnight. Like in any other process, there are steps that need to be worked through. In the absence of a collective vision and a shared commitment to change, there can be no successful reform of the United Nations common system. Our concept is of a single United Nations family, with easy access from one organization to another, where talent and contributions are fully recognized and where staff members are encouraged to commit to organizational and United Nations-wide goals. The Commission is serious about its role in enhancing the effectiveness of the common system; I know that the Committee is, too. In this regard, let us recall what the Secretary-General said in his acceptance speech to the General Assembly: "The true measure of success for the United Nations is not how much we promise, but how much we deliver to those who need us most" (see A/61/PV31). We, as a Commission, are re-engineering ourselves in anticipation of the inevitable changes within the United Nations organizations, and we look forward to closer collaboration with the Committee on all matters of common interest.